

INTER-RESEARCH: 30 YEARS OF QUALITY SCIENCE PUBLISHING

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ABSTRACT: Inter-Research (IR) has been publishing high quality journals in the aquatic and other sciences for over 30 yrs. Central to IR's success are its consistently high standards in the peer review and production processes, the low price of its journals on a cost-per-page published basis, the availability of its entire published corpus on-line, and its policy of making its publications freely accessible after 5 yr. This paper for the Proceedings of the 35th IAMS LIC Conference summarizes the activities of IR and its publications. In addition, some observations are made on the increasing difficulty in selecting referees, the use of Open Access material, and the role of subscription agencies.

KEYWORDS: Inter-Research Science Center, publishers, publishing

Inter-Research and its journals

Inter-Research (IR) was founded in 1979 by Prof. Otto Kinne. It is a self-sustaining international science center and publishing house. Before becoming a publisher himself, Prof. Kinne had been leading Director of the Biologische Anstalt Helgoland (a highly regarded marine research institute), founder of the European Marine Biology Symposium, founder and Editor-in-Chief of the journal 'Marine Biology', and editor and co-author of several science book series. Located in the small village of Oldendorf/Luhe, Germany, south of Hamburg, IR is a small publisher compared to its giant commercial competitors; this enables IR to devote most of its income to the quality of the articles it publishes.

IR's 7 journals — 'Marine Ecology Progress Series' (MEPS), 'Diseases of Aquatic Organisms' (DAO), 'Climate Research' (CR), 'Aquatic Microbial Ecology' (AME), 'Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics' (ESEP), 'Endangered Species Research' (ESR), and 'Aquatic Biology' (AB) — are recognized worldwide as leaders in their respective fields of science. In 2009, IR launched its 8th journal, 'Aquaculture Environment Interactions' (AEI). IR's flagship, MEPS, will publish its 400th volume in early 2010; MEPS has attained a total of >10 000 research articles spanning >120 000 pages. MEPS is today on the No. 1 position by 'eigenfactor' in the categories 'Marine & Freshwater Biology' and 'Oceanography'—far ahead of all competitors (www.eigenfactor.org); MEPS's impact factor (currently 2.63) has been steadily rising for years.

Peer review

Reliable, quality-controlled information is the pre-requisite for orderly communication among scientists and for advancement in science (Kinne 1999). IR journals have a total of 500 Editors (Contributing Editors plus Review Editors) worldwide. IR cooperates with thousands of 'anonymous referees'. In 2007, a centralized, electronic article tracking system was introduced to improve the review procedures and to relieve Editors of the clerical tasks. Papers accepted for publication from the >2000 manuscripts submitted each year to IR have been reviewed by at least 3 referees (most other publishers use 2).

Peer review is a fundamental part of science. However, this task is today seriously impeded, as scientists must increasingly devote time and effort to preparing applications for research funding and meeting other bureaucratic demands. Ten years ago, an editor could expect 4 of 6 potential referees to accept our invitation to review a paper. Today, often 10 or more potential referees need to be approached before the required number of referees can be attained. Despite the increasing difficulty in selecting referees, IR maintains its high standards in manuscript review that it is known for.

Care in data reporting

IR publishes faster than most other journals (ca. 3 mo from acceptance to publication) and is highly regarded by authors (judging from comments made in the returned proofs) for the considerable care and effort it invests in copy-editing and typesetting of papers. Apart from the actual printing of the journals, all production is carried out by the IR staff based at Oldendorf/Luhe, aided by freelance copyeditors and typesetters. Before publication, each paper goes through several stages involving copyediting, typesetting, proofreading and correcting by IR staff, and papers may be subject to significant improvements, occasionally at a late stage in the production process. For this reason, data or conclusions reported from pre-published manuscripts in non-IR Open Access (OA) Repositories must be checked against the version published by IR.

Subscription pricing

IR journal prices, on the basis of cost per page published, are significantly lower than those of most other commercial publishers. IR journals are rated by Bergstrom & McAfee (www.journalprices.com) in the 'mid-price' range, with the exception of CR, which is rated 'good value'. The price per volume for all IR journals has remained constant since 2007. Details of individual title prices and discounted package subscriptions are available on the IR website (www.int-res.com). Libraries seeking other package or consortia deals are encouraged to contact IR directly. IR also maintains mailing lists for the latest tables of contents for each of its journals, which can be subscribed to free of charge through the IR website.

Role of subscription agencies

Many libraries prefer to place their subscriptions through a subscription agency. However, subscribing through a subscription agency can add up to 10% or more on top of the publisher's journal price. It is time for a thorough cost/benefit analysis of subscription

agency services. The apparent benefits (savings in staff time and effort, systems costs, currency conversions and reporting services) may be a false economy, since these operational costs are instead transferred to the library's purchasing budget, thus weakening the power of the library to make purchases.

The fact is that the use of subscription services costs libraries more money than they are usually aware of. IR does not subsidize subscription services, which makes it possible to keep subscription rates low. IR encourages libraries to subscribe directly through the IR website, or by email to subscriptions@int-res.com.

Article accessibility

IR launched its website in 1995, and by 2000 was publishing all its journals online as well as in print. The entire 30 yr published corpus of IR became available online through the IR website in 2007. After 5 years, IR makes all its journals freely accessible (OA) as a service to the science community. This, and the introduction in 2005 of Feature Articles (FA) which are automatically OA, as well as author-funded OA articles, have greatly enhanced the global visibility of our journals. According to IR's web statistics, FAs are downloaded 5 times more frequently, and OA articles are downloaded 2.5 times more often than regular articles (M. Seaman unpubl.). All articles in the newer journals, ESR, ESEP and AEI, are currently also OA, free of charge to authors. The option of author-funded OA for MEPS, AB, AME, DAO and CR is, at 700 Euro, among the cheapest available. IR does not levy page charges.

In addition, several books and book series edited and co-authored by Prof. Kinne are available on the IR website for free download, including the renowned treatises 'Marine Ecology' and 'Diseases of Marine Animals', for which the copyright was graciously transferred from the original publishers to Prof. Kinne.

Usage Statistics

Download statistics for IR articles are available on request. These are not yet officially COUNTER compliant, though the statistics generated by IR generally use the same criteria and filters as COUNTER.

IR Ecological Park

IR financially protects and conducts research on highly endangered local species. The grounds of IR include a 8.2 ha reserve near the banks of the river Luhe designated as an ecological sanctuary for rare amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, birds and plants; most notably the fire-bellied toad *Bombina bombina* and other amphibian species that are reared in IR facilities and released into the wild.

Sponsorship Activities

IR sponsors several non-profit organizations, philanthropic trusts, and scholarships:

(1) The International Ecology Institute (ECI) is an organization of research ecologists dedicated to fostering ecological awareness. Recipients of the highly regarded annual ECI Prize (awarded for excellence in marine, limnetic or terrestrial ecology in rotation)

publish overviews of their fields of professional competence in the IR book series 'Excellence in Ecology' (EE Books). A considerable number of EE Books are donated to libraries in developing countries.

Two books are currently in production: EE Book 17 by Michel Loreau (ECI laureate in 2002), entitled 'The challenges of biodiversity science', and EE Book 22 by Daniel Pauly (ECI laureate in 2007), entitled 'Gasping fish and panting squids: oxygen, temperature and the growth of water breathing animals'.

(2) International Recognition of Professional Excellence (IRPE prize) is awarded to young ecologists who have published original and/or challenging research representing an important scientific breakthrough.

(3) The Eco-Ethics International Union (EEIU) is devoted to developing and implementing a new concept of ethics based on scientific knowledge. EEIU Chapters have been founded in all parts of the world (see www.eei.org).

(4) The Otto Kinne Foundation provides funds to young environmental scientists from Eastern European countries for research projects, educational travel, or purchase of scientific equipment or other resources.

(5) IR sponsors the 'Karl Ritter von Frisch Preis' of the Deutsche Zoologische Gesellschaft.

(6) IR financially supports international Symposia (convened in conjunction with major international conferences) on cutting-edge topics, with selected papers from the Symposia published in one of the IR journals (e.g. 'Satellite tracking for the conservation of migratory vertebrates' ESR 4[1–2]).

Concluding Remarks

Part of IR's strength is the high value it places on cooperating directly with its authors and subscribers.

Please address IR in regard to special requests or questions either via its website www.int-res.com, or via ir@int-res.com.

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